

March 7, 2012

Bob Harrington

MT DNRC

**Summary:**

Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) parcels have been delineated for all 56 counties (Figure 1). Community Wildfire Protection Plans (CWPPs) with designated WUI boundaries were used to determine WUI parcels. If a county's CWPP did not include a WUI map but instead included only written definitions of their WUI, a parcel map was drafted and DNRC fire managers then worked with county fire personnel to finalize their WUI. Individual county WUI parcel maps are available on the DNRC website.

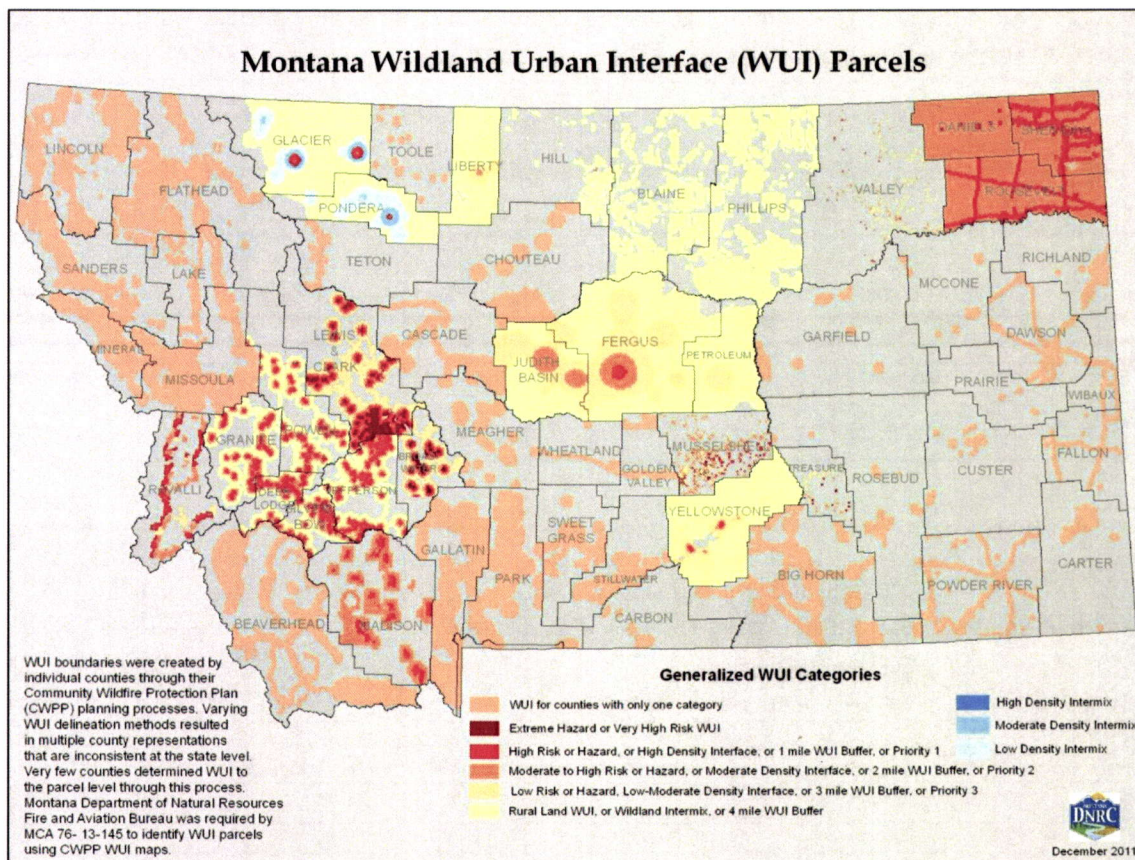


Figure 1. Montana WUI parcels.

**Progress Report:**

MCA 76-13-145 requires the Department of Natural Resources and Conservation to:

1. Identify Montana's Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) parcels in each county based on the WUI designation developed as part of the county's Community Wildfire Protection Plan
2. Create and maintain maps of each counties' WUI parcels and
3. Ensure that the maps and information are available to the public, local governing bodies, and governmental fire agencies.

WUI parcel boundary maps (8.5"x11" pdfs) for all 56 counties have been added to the DNRC Fire and Aviation website for public viewing and downloading. Community Wildfire Protection Plans



(CWPP's) are also available on the site. CWPPs or Pre-Disaster Mitigation Plans (PDMPs) accepted as substitute CWPPs according to Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) criteria, have been collected from 53 of Montana's 56 counties. **Three** counties do not have a CWPP, or a PDMP that is approved as a CWPP: Daniels, Roosevelt and Sheridan. These counties have no plans to complete CWPPs but may include a CWPP/WUI chapter in their next PDMP update that could be approved as a CWPP. County WUI parcel maps and CWPPs are available at <http://dnrc.mt.gov/Forestry/Fire/WUI/cwppdefault.asp>.

CWPPs portray WUI boundaries using a variety of methods (Figure 1). Some counties consider nearly their entire county as some type of WUI, while others only recognize small buffers around certain communities. Some counties followed the 2003 Healthy Forest Restoration Act (HFRA) WUI boundaries quite closely and others did not (Figure 2). Little consistency exists between counties since each defined its WUI independently of other counties. **Thirty-one** counties designated only one category of WUI. The remaining **twenty-five** counties designated multiple WUI levels; some of their categories included:

- varying designations of areas of 'Very High', 'High', 'Moderate' and 'Low' Risk or Hazard WUI (Lewis and Clark, Daniels, Sheridan, Roosevelt, Broadwater, Madison, and Ravalli);
- modified versions of the University of Wisconsin Silvics WUI Interface and Intermix WUI levels and Rural WUI areas (Blaine, Hill, and Phillips);
- probability rankings of WUI occurrence (5-95%) (Glacier, Pondera, Liberty, Judith Basin, Fergus, Petroleum, and Yellowstone);
- 4-one mile wide WUI buffer zones (Deer Lodge, Granite, Powell, Jefferson and Butte-Silver Bow);
- Points (mostly structures or hazardous areas) designated by counties at 'Extreme Hazard', 'High Hazard' and/or 'Moderate Hazard' levels that were applied to parcel polygons (Musselshell, Treasure and Valley).

Approximately 38% of Montana's land area is considered WUI according to the combined county CWPP WUI definitions. The HFRA WUI area in Montana, based on statewide criteria including Communities at Risk, 2000 Census population density, major roads and slopes greater than 25% sustained at greater than 5 acres, is approximately 21% (Table 1).

**Table 1. Approximate area of Wildland Urban Interface (WUI) in Montana.**

	<b>WUI from Counties</b>	<b>HFRA WUI</b>
<b>Acres</b>	36,129,755.09	19,961,428.02
<b>Square miles</b>	56,452.74	31,189.73
<b>Percent WUI</b>	38%	21%

#### **Plans:**

Although the 8.5x 11 pdf parcel maps are available, in order to help the public and agencies see boundary delineations close up, larger plotter-sized pdf maps (34"x44") are currently under production. When completed, they will be added to the website; however their large file size and plotter formatting will prohibit printing for the average public viewer. These maps can be requested from DNRC. It should be realized that every time a county parcel GIS layer changes, the WUI potentially becomes out of date. Additionally, some counties are in the process of updating their CWPPs. When completed and accessed from the counties or their contractors, the plans will be added to the Department's website. WUI parcel boundaries will need to be modified depending upon boundary changes in the CWPP updates.

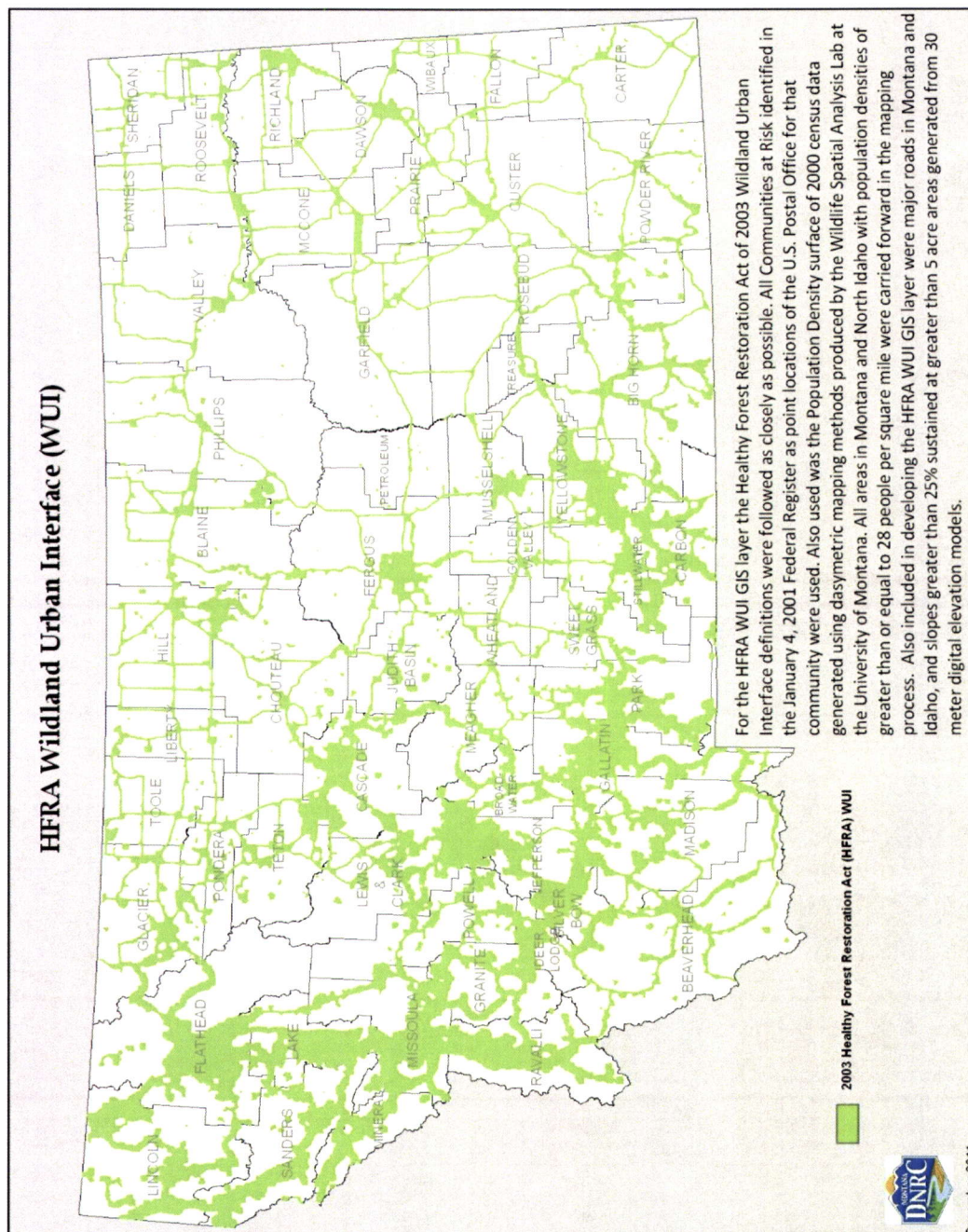


Figure 2. HFRA WUI (2003).